



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

Season of Lent

March 23, 2023

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 12

UCJCI 43rd SYNOD THEME – **Rooted, Resilient: Re-ignited by the Spirit** (Return, Reconnect, Realign, Re-ignite)

Transforming for Renewal (Stewardship)

Mr. Bryan Bothwell

“The *opposite of love is not hate; it is indifference.*” That simple observation by Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel has stuck with me since I was a young man. I grew up very much seeing ‘love your neighbor’ in action in numerous ways in our daily lives. On the other hand, we were taught *not to hate people and not to “hold something against someone”* because of the essentialness of forgiveness. The Church still teaches this. But for most people, “hate” is an uncommon emotion. *Indifference* is a more deceptive trap and, therefore, more widely captures the core of the problem. How, in practice, *can we love like Jesus*, given the *breadth and transformative depth* of what *that would entail*.

So “*indifference*” and that contrast to love came readily to my mind for today’s theme which is, “*Return*”. “*Return*”, specifically *as a strategic direction* for the United Church. Of course, that means *also, and foremost, for each of us who collectively make up that particular body within Christ’s worldwide Church*. For we know Christianity is *personal*, though if you want to *keep it to yourself*, it is *not* Christianity!

The aim is for a *four-pillared* direction: *Return*, as well as *Reconnect, Realign, and Re-ignite*. With the *overall goal* of ensuring we *will be, and remain, Rooted, Resilient: Re-ignited by the Spirit*. Clearly, if *any person or organization is to remain rooted and resilient, in any field, there is no room for indifference*. We see examples all the time of major failures because of indifference to fundamental principles of all kinds. Without raising personal ones, we see an organization - whether commercial, church, or charity - saying all the right things about the strength of their care for people, risk management, their books, etc. Then, suddenly, *major, sometimes crippling, incidents* give lie to these claims. Then it becomes obvious that they *might* have had the right *infrastructure*, and in some cases *intended integrity*; but were brought down by *indifference* by those *responsible* for looking *closely, mindfully, and beyond the tips of their noses*, to ensure everything was done as required.

And if anyone or any church also wants to be *ignited* or *re-ignited* by the *Holy Spirit*, there is *certainly* no room for *indifference* in his, or her or the church’s life. “Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?”, Jesus asked. [Lk 6:46] Then declared that is like “the person who builds a

house *without a foundation*”, which is easily swept away. And the *Risen Lord’s* warnings in Revelation 3 to the church “*whose actions do not meet the requirements of my God*” and that He would “*spit out*” the church that had become “*lukewarm*” are even stronger!

That makes clear why Synod is calling us to be “*rooted*” *in, and securely into*, the Foundation of Christ as Lord. “*Dig deep and lay the foundation on solid rock*” Jesus said [Lk 6: 48]. So that we can remain “*resilient*” even “*when*”, as Jesus noted, *not if, “when the floods sweep down”* [Lk 6: 49 NLT]. Clearly, we, the individuals in the Church, *need that resilience* in our faith in Christ, not just to make us better people, but for our wellbeing in those inevitable “*floods*” of this life, confident that God is with us going into them *and all the way through to and after the end of whatever* it may be.

The Church’s approaches are not always effective at moving people to *build that personal resilience*. But we *must* be concerned that while *Christ’s Church on Earth* will “*not be overcome*”, *individual congregations* and, nowadays, denominations, have to actually *do* that for which He called us or be “*spit out*”. However, *that is never the outcome* Christ *wants*. For God’s never-waning desire for people has always been so much nobler than we seem to want for ourselves, as we see again in Rom. 8: 6 – 11 [NLT]:

“... letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. *But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.* For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the *Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to Him at all.*) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, *the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, Who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you.* And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, He will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.” Amen

I urge you to also read Ezekiel 37: 1 – 14, anew, in fact, the whole chapter, along with at least some of those leading up to it. It is the familiar story of the “*Valley of Dry Bones.*” We note that God asked Ezekiel, in effect, *if the impossible could*

actually take place. And Ezekiel had the faith in the omnipotence of God to reply, “O Sovereign Lord, *You alone know* the answer to that.”

Then God gave two prophetic messages for Ezekiel to speak, one to the old “bones”, the other to “the winds” (or “breath”). In each case, Ezekiel does *not* hesitate over the seemingly preposterous. Instead, he confirms, “*So I spoke this message, just as [God] told me.*” Then he could see all the intricate, interconnected things that would happen as, *building block by block*, the *seemingly impossible became, not only possible but, reality.* Then God explained the meaning of what Ezekiel had been made to behold, as we read in verses 11 – 14:

11 ..., “Son of man, *these bones represent the people of Israel.* They are saying, ‘*We have become old, dry bones—all hope is gone.* Our nation is finished.’ 12 Therefore, prophesy to them and say, ‘*This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel.*’ 13 When this happens, O my people, *you will know that I am the Lord.* 14 *I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land.* Then you will know that *I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done what I said. ...*’

And God did bring them back from exile. But the *real home*, the real *return* God provided for them, was *not* to the Israel they had left. By no means! They were in exile precisely because of how they had *caused, or allowed*, that life to be corrupted from the quality-of-life God had ordained. (*Not carefully that both the active and the idle participants in this corrosion were held accountable.*) *Not* return to that life where, God denounced, even the “shepherds” had “*not taken care of the weak, ... not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost,*” etc., [34], and where *the people would not “obey my life-giving laws”* [e.g., 33]. Instead, the *return* was to be *to God’s Lordship of their lives*, where, He had said, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, *and you will be clean;* [NIV] *And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.* [NLT]” [36:25-26]

That was what the *Return* would mean, *not* a return to the *same*. Just as Jesus saying we must be “born again” of the Spirit, was in order to *become* the “*new creation*”, as God had made us *to be* from the beginning. In Romans 8:6-11, we are reminded that *we too* will have that *real life*, just as the people in Ezekiel who had *felt* they were “*old, dry bones*” in whom “*all hope is [dead]*”, if we have accepted Christ as *Lord of our lives.* That is the *Return* our Synod is urging us to go for. Indeed, it is the *only way we can go if*, as St. Paul concluded, *if* we are blessed to have the Spirit live in us.

If we are going for this, we must go all out. Like Ezekiel, no hesitation, no worrying that people will be thinking we are ‘speaking’ to “dry bones” or “the wind.” No half-heartedness, no indifference, for we are instructed that, always, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord ... (Col 3)”, and in this case, we are actually working for the Lord.

Therefore, as Ezekiel responded, we must respond, saying, praying, and doing ‘exactly as the Lord commanded’, all through the full process to make the impossible come to be, building block by building block. The bone, the needed structures (on the One Sure Foundation); the tendons for all the needed proficiencies; the flesh, with the “responsive heart” and lifeblood God requires for the new day; the sensitive skin to synergize with, and caringly touch, others. So that all who are “lost”, or are “without hope” or left unequipped, obliged to glean where the pickings are too scarce in God’s abundant world, can receive the Breath of the Spirit of God and the fullness of life He desires for us. Amen.

2023 Girls’ Brigade Week

The activities of the 2023 Girls’ Brigade Week were brought to a close on Saturday, March 18, 2023, at the Prospect Youth Centre (PYC), where all the Companies joined together one more time to engage in fellowship and fun-filled, creative, and educational activities.



The Explorers engaged in various creative activities at the PYC



The Juniors visited Mr. Renford ‘Rennie’ Barnes’ historic display center.

SYNOD CORNER

Bulletin #10

Theme: Rooted and Resilient: Reignited by the Spirit.

Moderator-Elect: Rt Rev Gary Harriott

Date: April 23-30, 2023

During the 43rd Synod, the following public events will take place at the Elmslie Memorial United Church:

Sunday, April 23, 2023, at 4:00 PM
Opening Service

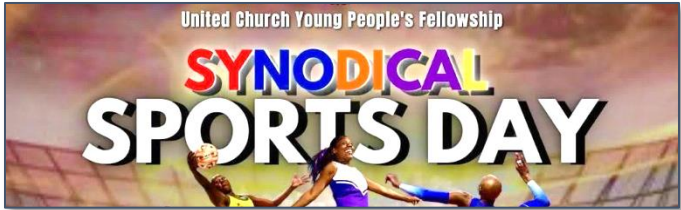
Monday, April 24, 2023, at 6:00 PM
Moderator's Reception

Tuesday, April 25, 2023, at 6:00 PM
Celebration of Life and Witness

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 6:00 PM
Public Lecture

Sunday, April 30, 2023, at 4:00 PM
Closing Service

We invite you to attend these events and also to remember to pray for God's guidance and blessings on the 43rd Synod of the UCJCI.



Mr. Roy McGregor

Over the weekend of March 17-19, 2023 a group from the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council (6 leaders and 13 youth) attended the United Church Young People's Fellowship (UCYPF) National Sports Day in Jamaica. A small group that did GREAT things.



Ready to depart from Grand Cayman.



The Seniors and Brigaders went to Art Nest for their craft activity.



Old Timers' Corner



Worship

We didn't place 1st overall but walked away with 20 medals (6 Gold 🥇, 7 Silver 🥈, 7 Bronze 🥉) which we believe is an exceptional job by the youngsters. Special thanks to those who prayed and supported the team.

Sports Day Medal Tally - 2023

100 m Boys

Class 3 - Gold 🥇 (Josh Gardener - Savannah)

Class 4 - Silver 🥈 (Samuel Webb - Elmslie)

100 m Girls

Class 3 - Gold 🥇 (Renadra Smith-Powell - Elmslie)

Class 4 - Bronze 🥉 (Kiyanna Quinland - Savannah)

200 m Boys

Class 3 - Gold 🥇 (Josh Gardener - Savannah)

Class 3 - Bronze 🥉 (Reuben Moore - Savannah)

Class 4 - Silver 🥈 (Samuel Webb - Elmslie)

200 m Girls

Class 3 - Bronze 🥉 (Renadra Smith-Powell - Elmslie)

Class 4 - Gold 🥇 (Kiyanna Quinland - Savannah)

Class 4 - Silver 🥈 (Kaylie Arianna McDonald - Elmslie)

400 m Boys

Class 3 - Silver 🥈 (Reuben Moore - Savannah)

Class 4 - Bronze 🥉 (Samuel Webb - Elmslie)

400 m Girls

Class 4 - Bronze 🥉 (Ashley Reza – JGMC.)

4x100 m

Girls Open - Gold 🥇

Boys Open - Bronze 🥉

4x200m

Girls Open - Gold 🥇

Young Adults Race Male Silver 🥈 (Roy McGregor - Elmslie)

Ministers Race Female Silver 🥈 (Jusan Hamilton – JGMC)

Potato Race Open Bronze 🥉 (Ashley Reza – JGMC)

Dominoes Open Silver 🥈

We thank the leaders, organizers and Congregations who invested much time, effort and energy into this ministry. Congratulations to all of them on their well-deserved success!



Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council
Peace Initiative Project
2023 Easter



The main items needed are:

- Bed linen (preferably new – single/twin and double sheet sets)
- Towels/ rags
- Grocery items and toiletries
- Kitchenware
- Grocery vouchers (Any supermarket and Cost U Less)
- Gift vouchers – (Digicel, Flow, CUC)

The deadline for delivery of the items to the Council Office is March 31, 2023.

Thank you for your participation and continued support!



Remember in your prayers!

All those God has placed on your heart and those brought to your attention in some way. Please, include in your prayers Lay Pastor John Macmillan, Mr Trevor Watler and Mrs Itza Bodden.



on Radio Cayman 89.9
 every Sunday at 7:45 am

March 26, 2023
Mr. Bryan Bothwell

Published by the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
 292 Prospect Point Road
 P.O. Box 1700 Grand Cayman KY1-1109 CAYMAN ISLANDS
 Tel: 1 345 947-1963 Email: rdgs@cicucjci.com or cirmcinfo@gmail.com
 Website: unitedchurch.org.ky